DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 241 014 IR 050 589

TITLE	Final Report to the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science from the Community Information and Referral Services Task Force.
INSTITUTION	National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, Washington, D. C.
PUB DATE	May 83
NOTE	33p.
AVAILABLE FROM	For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.
PUB TYPE	Viewpoints (120) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Check Lists; *Community Information Services; Guidelines; *Institutional Cooperation; Library Role; *Library Services; *Public Libraries; Social Agencies; *Social Services
IDENTIFIERS	National Commission Libraries Information Science

ABSTRACT

This report describes the work of the Community Information and Referral (CI&R) Services Task Force, which was appointed by the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) to investigate the status of CI&R in libraries and social service agencies and to make recommendations regarding the appropriate role for libraries in the field of CI&R. CI&R is defined as the active process of linking people with needs to resources (agencies, programs, people, or institutions) that can handle those needs. The body of the report is divided into four sections: (1) a concise statement of the problem and the history of the Task Force; (2) a definition of the scope of CI&R services and an analysis of these services, from the perspective of users, the government, and CI&R providers; (3) a list of organizational, staff, and administrative criteria that contribute to the provision of high-quality CI&R services and an analysis of possible ways to provide these services, with the conclusion that CI&R is an interdisciplinary task best accomplished by the coordination of social service agency and library efforts; and (4) a series of 13 recommendations in the areas of education, policy/legislation, promotion of services, and experimentation and study. Also provided are an executive summary and a Task Force membership list. (Author/ESR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

Community Information and Referral Services

Final Report to the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science from the CI&R Task Force

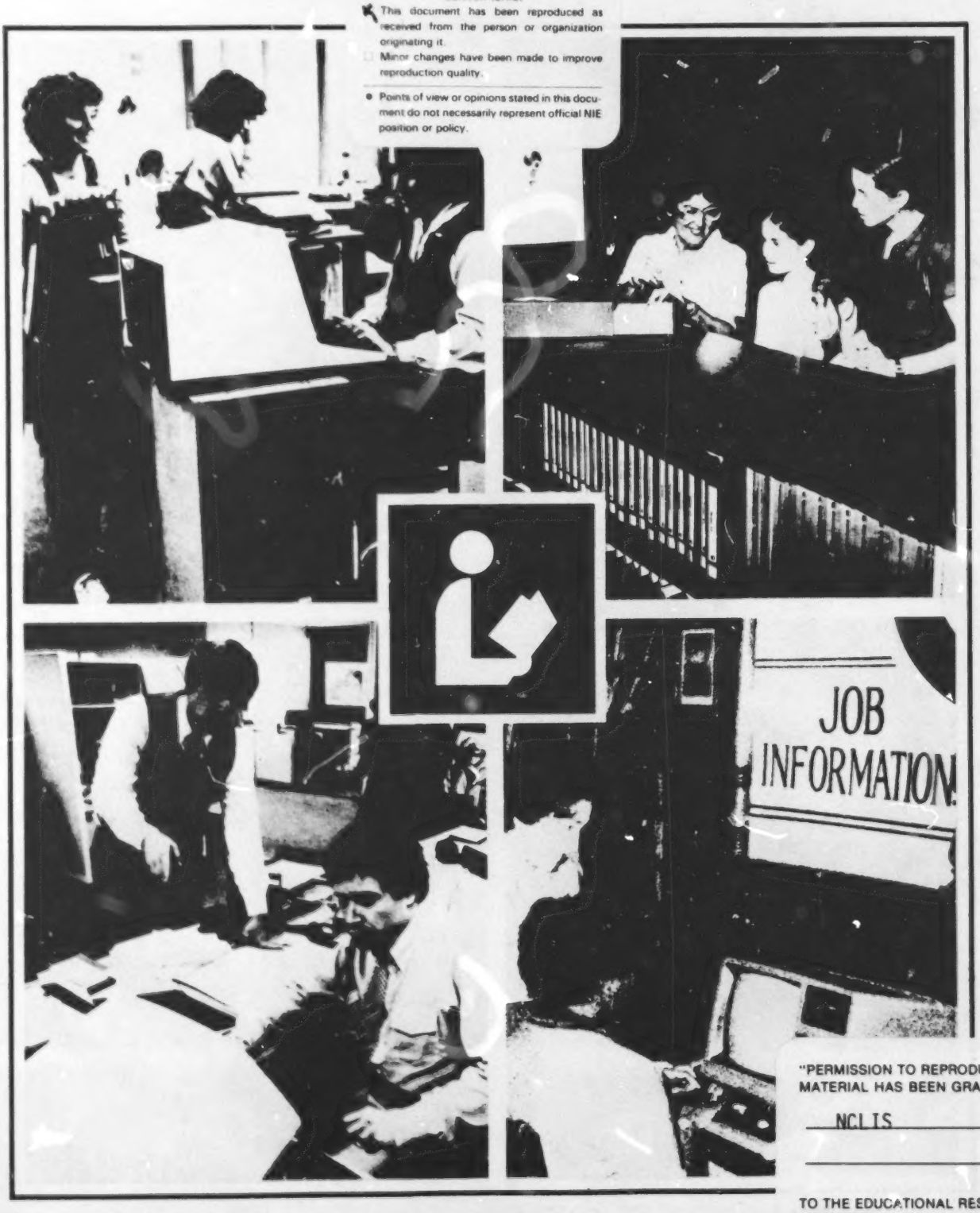
ED241014

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.



IR006889

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

NCLIS

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

NATIONAL COMMISSION ON LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

Commission Members

Elinor M. Hashim, Chairman
Bessie Boehm Moore, Vice Chairman
Helmut Alpers
Gordon M. Ambach
Charles Benton
Daniel J. Boorstin
Carlos A. Cuadra
Paulette E. Holahan
John E. Juergensmeyer
Francis Keppel
Byron Leeds
Jerald C. Newman
Philip A. Sprague
Margaret S. Warden
William J. Welsh
(serves for
Dr. Boorstin)
Julia Li Wu

For further information contact:

Toni Carbo Bearman
Executive Director
National Commission on Libraries and Information Science
GSA Regional Office Building 3
7th & D Streets, S.W.
Suite 3122
Washington, D.C. 20024
(202) 382-0840

July 1983

Cover Photos: Clockwise

The anSir Information and Referral Service now operating in 160 West Virginia libraries (Photo by Ross Taylor, courtesy of the West Virginia Library Commission)

The Job and Career Information Center, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, Maryland (Photo by David V. Tirschman)

The Community Information Service at the Houston, Texas Public Library (Photo by Craig Hartley, *The Houston Post* © 1983)

Automated Community Resource Files at the Penrose Library, Pikes Peak Library District, Colorado Springs, Colorado (Photo by Nancy De Lury)

FINAL REPORT TO THE

NATIONAL COMMISSION ON LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

from the

COMMUNITY INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICES

TASK FORCE

May 1983

National Commission
on Libraries and Information Science

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

United States. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science. Community Information and Referral Services Task Force.
Final report to the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science from the Community Information and Referral Services Task Force.

"May 1983."
Includes bibliographical references.
1. Libraries and community. 2. Public libraries--United States--Reference services. 3. Community life--Information services--United States. 4. Social service--Information services--United States. 5. Public welfare--Information services--United States
I. Title.
Z716.4.U55 1983 025.5'277473 83-12191

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
Washington, D.C. 20402

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page Number
	Foreword	ii
	Executive Summary	iii
I.	The Task and the Task Force	1
	Overview of the Task	1
	Establishment of the Task Force	2
	Membership and Operation of the Task Force	3
	Structure of the Report	4
II.	Community Information and Referral Services	5
	Defining the Scope of Community Information and Referral Services	5
	The User's Perspective	9
	The Government Perspective	10
	The Provider Perspective	11
III.	Organizational Responses to the CI&R Challenge	13
	Criteria for the Provision of CI&R	13
	Potential Solutions: A New CI&R	14
	Potential Solutions: Existing Institutions	15
	Coordinated Service Provision	18
IV.	Recommendations	19
	Education Recommendations	19
	Policy/Legislation Recommendations	20
	Promotional Recommendations	20
	Experimentation and Study Recommendations	21
NOTES		22
APPENDIX		
	Membership List	23

FOREWORD

The National Commission on Libraries and Information Science received, accepted, and endorsed this report of the Task Force on Community Information and Referral Services at its meeting in April 1983. The Commission thanks the Task Force members for the time, effort and dedicated service that have produced this report.

The Task Force on Community Information and Referral Services was established in 1980, and charged with defining the appropriate role for public libraries in the provision of community information and referral services and describing ways in which libraries can more effectively fulfill that role. This Task Force was a direct result of concern expressed at the White House Conference on Library and Information Services that the library should be the first place in the community to which people turn when seeking information services. Conference attendees stressed that the library should provide users from all socio-economic and cultural backgrounds with information and, where appropriate, referral to those sources that could provide answers and assistance.

Several recommendations of the Task Force concerned recognition of the community information and referral functions of public libraries in legislation and statements of policy. The National Commission on Libraries and Information Science and other library and information organizations have brought these recommendations to the attention of the appropriate committees of the U.S. Congress that are currently amending the Library Services and Construction Act. The U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on Education and Labor has included the concept of community information and referral services in H.R. 2878 sent to the full House for consideration.

The Commission knows of several successful community information and referral programs being conducted by public libraries in Amherst, Massachusetts; Baltimore County, Maryland; Caroline County, Maryland; Detroit, Michigan; Dallas, Texas; Memphis, Tennessee; Colorado Springs, Colorado; and San Mateo, California. Information about these programs can be found in Information and Referral: Public Libraries by Thomas Childers, a member of the Task Force. The book is to be published by Ablex Press in the fall of 1983. We encourage the readers of this report to send us comments on the report and to bring other successful programs to our attention.

Elinor M. Hashim
Chairman
National Commission on Libraries
and Information Science

August 1983

Report to the NCLIS

From the

Community Information and Referral Services Task Force

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Community Information and Referral Services (CI&R) began with the formation of social service agencies in the early part of this century. Simply stated, CI&R is the active process of linking people with needs to resources (agencies, programs, people, institutions) that can handle those needs. As our social service programs have increased, the task of providing Community Information and Referral has become more and more complex. Originally the social service personnel responsible for delivering direct service programs also attempted to deliver CI&R. As new social programs developed, as eligibility requirements were established, and as the maze of Federal, state and local funding sources began overlapping, the need for a centralized, all-inclusive CI&R for a given locality to enable people to find appropriate resources became apparent. Public libraries became involved in CI&R around 1969. Since that time many libraries have expanded their information role to include the provision of CI&R.

The Community Information and Referral Services Task Force was established by the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS) in February 1980. It was asked to review the status of CI&R in libraries and social service agencies and to make recommendations to NCLIS on the appropriate role for libraries in the field of CI&R in the future. The results of this investigation are presented in the Report of the Task Force, which was submitted to the NCLIS in March 1982.

The body of the Report is divided into four sections. THE TASK AND THE TASK FORCE includes a concise statement of the problem, as well as the history of the NCLIS Task Force.

COMMUNITY INFORMATION AND REFERRAL contains an analysis of CI&R. The Task Force was first faced with the need to define. Some members of the Task Force felt that the scope of study should include all uses of information in meeting human needs. This broad perspective would include the dissemination of Federal information, reference work in libraries, commercialized databases, and so on. The majority of the Task Force, however, felt strongly that the group's study should be limited to the provision of Community Information and Referral Services as it has been known in the social service delivery system for many years. Therefore this narrow perspective has guided the Task Force's work.

A 1978 report to Congress by the Comptroller General of the United States on CI&R concluded that the bureaucratic maze of agencies

delivering information and referral has created chaos. The need for a streamlined approach was emphasized in the report. Included in the Task Force's section on definitions is an analysis of the various components of CI&R. Some of these are traditional areas of strength for social service agencies. Others create stumbling blocks. Libraries involved in CI&R have as primary strengths the organization and updating procedures for information files, but the interviewing and assessment skills required for CI&R delivery are lacking in most library training.

This section further analyzes the CI&R picture from the user perspective, the government perspective, and the perspective of CI&R providers.

In the section entitled ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSES TO THE CI&R CHALLENGE, the Report lists a number of criteria that contribute to the provision of a high-quality CI&R service, including criteria for the organization, staff, and administration. It then attempts to analyze some possible solutions, from the creation of a new institution to handle CI&R (which is rejected) to the conclusion that CI&R is an interdisciplinary task which can best be accomplished by the coordination of efforts between social service agencies and libraries.

The Report concludes with 13 specific RECOMMENDATIONS. They are divided into four broad categories: Education, Policy/Legislation, Promotional, and Experimentation and Study. Although there are several specific recommendations for experimentation and study intended to broaden our understanding of the use of CI&R's by the public, the majority of the recommendations are aimed at educating present and future practitioners of CI&R.

CI&R has most often been a last-minute addition to specific program legislation that lacks specific funding and broad legislative perspective. Inadequate funding and overlapping mandates have created the maze cited in the General Accounting Office report. The legislation recommendations state specific ways this problem can be overcome.

CI&R is one answer to the human dilemma of not knowing where to turn for help. It must be understood as such by legislators and citizens, and adequately supported by society.

I. THE TASK AND THE TASK FORCE

OVERVIEW OF THE TASK

The 1978 Report to the Congress by the Comptroller General of the United States, Information and Referral for People Needing Human Services--A Complex System That Should be Improved stated:

> "Many agencies provide information and referral support to help people link up with these human service systems. Unfortunately, those people who provided information and referral services have, themselves, become part of the maze to which they were supposed to offer guidance. This orderless growth has resulted in a specialized fragmented system characterized by--
>
> duplication of, and competition between services and functions
>
> waste of resources
>
> barriers obstructing access, and inadequate services.
>
> As a result, people can be shuffled from agency to agency, and many will either not receive the services needed or will receive them only after great or exasperating difficulty."

Since 1969, public libraries in the United States have become part of the CI&R maze. This Report of the Community Information and Referral Services Task Force of the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science examines the current status of information and referral in the country and the role that libraries should play, and makes recommendations for future action. Among the questions that faced the CI&R Task Force were the following:

What is the job to be done?

Who is to do the job?

Can/should the job be shared?

How can the public be reached?

What are the barriers to effective service?

What role might librarians play in providing CI&R?

The underlying assumption of the CI&R Task Force has been that CI&R is a vital service which must be continued.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TASK FORCE

The National Commission on Libraries and Information Science first directed its attention toward the area of community information and referral services in 1974, when one of its members attended a conference at Long Beach, California, on behalf of the Commission. The presentations and dicussions at that meeting were summarized for the Commission at its next meeting. The Commission was told, in essence, that the types of services encompassed by the term Community Information and Referral Services represented important new information services to the public--services that were then being provided primarily by social service agencies but that could also be provided, perhaps more effectively, by libraries. Indeed, some of these services were already being provided by libraries as a natural extension of their traditional reference services. However, the number of libraries thus involved was very, very small.

The summary report provided to the Commission mentioned that one of the factors deterring the provision of Community Information and Referral Services by libraries was the "followup" and "advocacy" roles being adopted by some of the non-library agencies that were providing CI&R services. These non-traditional roles were reflected, for example, in follow-up calls by these agencies to determine whether the clients referred by these agencies had actually received the information or the other services that they were seeking. In some cases, the referring agencies had become closely involved with the client's problem and had added their own pressure to that of the client.

Because of the obvious reluctance of many libraries to undertake new information services that seemed to replace the traditionally information-neutral role of libraries with a new role, and because of other priorities, the Commission decided to defer any further exploration of CI&R services as a major element in the "National Program" that it was then developing.

In 1977, a new member of the Commission helped to renew the Commission's interest in CI&R. Mrs. Clara Stanton Jones, as the Director of the Detroit Public Library, had made development of information and referral services a priority for the Detroit Public Library system, and, as President of the American Library Association (1976-1977), she urged the strengthening of information and referral services as an important extension of good reference service. The first-hand knowledge of CI&R work that was now being shared with the Commission led to a reassesment by the Commission of the potential role of CI&R services in the libraries of the 1980s.

The reassessment took into account the increasing demand by the public for information about health, transportation, recreation, personal finances, education, housing, employment, and other topics that have traditionally been the primary domain of a variety of other institutions. While many Federal, state and local agencies and private organizations were involved in addressing that demand, it seemed that the information and referral services being provided were

uneven in quality and accessiblity. It was also apparent that some of the information-gathering and information-organizing skills of libraries could be used very effectively in providing information and referral services. However, the Commission did not have information on the extent to which libraries were prepared to undertake a responsibility in an information environment where a number of organizations, both public and private, had already staked out information and referral territories.

In order to develop a more solid base of information on which the Commission could develop its view and recommendations on the appropriate role of libraries in the area of information and referral, early in 1980 the Commission voted to establish a Community Information and Referral Services Task Force.

MEMBERSHIP AND OPERATION OF THE TASK FORCE

Invitations to participate in the work of the CI&R Task Force were extended to a number of individuals who were actively involved and/or highly interested in CI&R work and who could offer different perspectives on the needs, problems and opportunities in this area. During the course of the Task Force's work, several new members were added. The membership of the Task Force, as of the date of the report, is show in the Appendix.

The first meeting of the Task Force was held on March 22, 1980, with Commissioner Jones serving as temporary chairperson. At this meeting, the Task Force discussed its charter and arrived at a definition of its mission, which was stated as follows:

> "To examine the appropriate roles for libraries in the provision of community information and referral service and define ways in which libraries can move toward the fulfillment of those roles."

The Task Force met six times as a group, with each of the members carrying out individual work assignments between the Task Force meetings. At two of the meetings, the group heard presentations from individuals engaged in some form of information and referral activity, and at a Task Force meeting held in Colorado Springs, the group toured and received presentations on the computerized community information and referral service offered by the Pikes Peak Library System.

The diverse membership of the Task Force resulted in a variety of perspectives on the issues of CI&R. Three members brought perspectives of CI&R practitioners; four, of directors of public libraries where CI&R was an important element of service; one, of a library educator who had conducted the most prominent research on CI&R in libraries; one, a practitioner from the social service sector outside of libraries; two, of founders of professional CI&R activities (Alliance of Information and Referral Services and the Community Information Section of the Public Library Association of the American Library Association); two, of information providers from the Federal sector. Several Commission members actively participated, as did a liaison

from the NCLIS Task Force on Library and Information Services to Cultural Minorities.

STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

This report of the Community Information and Referral Services Task Force consists of four sections and the Executive Summary. Part II defines and illustrates the CI&R problem from several perspectives and shows why there is a need for improvement in CI&R services, including better use and coordination of the resources devoted to them. Part III outlines several potential solutions for some of the problems identified, and Part IV presents the Task Force's conclusions and recommendations. Task Force membership is listed in the Appendix.

II. COMMUNITY INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICES

DEFINING THE SCOPE OF COMMUNITY INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICES

The Need for Definition. The first problem faced by the Task Force was defining the scope of community information and referral (CI&R). This is a problem not only for professionals in the CI&R field, but also for Federal, state and local government agencies and private organizations that are in some way (including sponsorship) involved in the CI&R area. Questions considered by the Task Force included:

> Are the terms "information and referral center" and "community information center" synonymous?
>
> Are CI&R services offered by organizations that are not normally recognized as CI&R providers?
>
> How does CI&R service relate to other information-giving functions?
>
> Are there both active and passive CI&R functions?

The Task Force tried to resolve the confusion in terminology by considering CI&R broadly at first, in contexts that transcend particular organizational contexts, client groups or topical focuses, and then by focusing on a more limited set of specific CI&R component services.

Linking. Information service organizations (libraries, information centers and other information-handling organizations or parts of organizations) have traditionally assumed the role of collecting, organizing, and making available information for their various constituencies. At one time it was conceivable that an information service organization could gather and contain within its own physical facilities most of the documents and information necessary to fulfill that role; but the exponential growth of information, the creation of new information and communication technologies, and a burgeoning demand for information have helped make this limited and limiting approach obsolete. It is now generally considered necessary for an information service organization to identify information resources that exist outside that information service organization and to facilitate access to them.

Expanding the availability of documents through interlibrary loan, cooperative acquisitions programs and regional document collections are three common means of expanding access to information held outside of a given information service organization. Another means of identifying, and facilitating access to, outside information and other resources can be termed "linking." Linking has as its main purpose facilitating contact between a client and the outside service, activity, information, or advice that can meet the client's need. Over the past 10 years this function has been performed in many information

service organizations under the name of "information and referral," a concept that originated in the human services sector. Information retrieval, selective dissemination of information (SDI), directory assistance, local and national hotlines, information brokering, and telephone information services are other manifestations of linking.

Information professionals see the linking function in different ways. Some see it as one or more processes: for example, switching (identifying for the client those resources appropriate for his/her need); and education (informing the client about the nature of the resources and actually establishing communication between the client and appropriate resources). These could be considered active services; and they are services that are provided on demand and on a custom basis for each client. A passive form of linking could be simply the provision of a directory to be used without assistance.

Defining CI&R Functions. In order to define more precisely the aspect of linking called CI&R, the Task Force elected to use the following definitions of component services, any or all of which may be present in a given linking service. These definitions have been drawn from the National Standards for Information and Referral Services (Alliance of Information and Referral Services, 1978) and from an article by Thomas Childers, "Trends in Public Library I&R," (Library Journal, October 1, 1979).

The services defined below are not mutually exclusive. For instance, Simple Information-Giving may involve some assessment of resources and thereby overlap with Advising--Resources.

Providing a Public Resource File

Constructing or obtaining a file or directory of outside resources and making it available for the client to consult on his or her own. In many linking services, a basic activity is the building and maintenance of a resource file, a list of local, regional or national resources that are of potential use to the constituency. Resource files may be found in a variety of formats: published directories, card files, microform lists, on-line computer files, videotex systems, loose-leaf notebooks, and bulletin boards. The building and maintenance of a resource file is an activity that supports information linking; it is not, per se, a linking service, except to the extent that the file is made available directly to the constituency.

Simple Information-Giving

Providing the client with the asked-for information about outside resources (such as eligibility requirements, charges, appropriate contact person within an organization, or steps to take in obtaining a service).

Simple Referral

Directing the client to (that is, telling about) resources appropriate to his/her needs.

Complex Referral

Participating actively in linking the client with the needed resource, by negotiating the client's need with the resource staff; scheduling appointments; verifying information for a specific client; or notifying resource staff of a forthcoming client contact.

Clarifying the Need

Determining the client's real needs through exploring beyond expressed needs to discover underlying needs or defining parts of a complex need.

Follow-up

Making sure the client has reached the proper outside resource and/or has gotten appropriate help.

Advising—Resources

Providing the client with formal or informal assessments of outside resources.

Advocacy

Helping the client overcome obstacles that he or she encounters in trying to secure assistance from outside resource agencies.

Reporting

From the insights or data gained through the linking services, providing formal feedback on constituency needs to politicans, planners, social agencies, and others.

Arranging for Related Services

Assisting the user in following through on the information link by arranging for related services such as transportation, copy service, meeting place, and so on.

Other Important Definitions and Distinctions. The term "community" is often used with I&R as part of a phrase: "Community I&R" or "CI&R." The term as thus used raised many questions for the Task Force because it introduces ambiguity. Does the word "community" refer to the location of the I&R service, to the clients for whom it is intended, to the type of data collected, or the location of their resources to which the clients are to be referred? The Task Force agreed that "community" is either the area or group of people with which an individual identifies himself and to which he can relate. A "community" can thus be a community of place or a community of interest. Thus, the term "community" suggests services that are focussed on particular needs or particular groups of people. The Task Force concluded that an individual and a CI&R are likely to relate

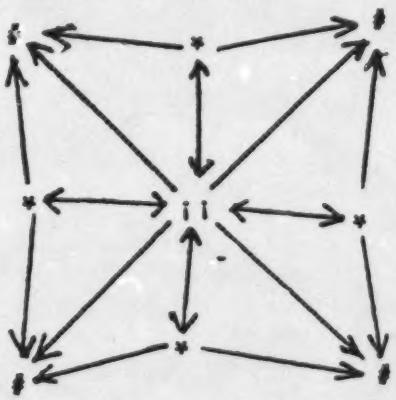
better when the CI&R speaks to the needs of the individual's "community." Therefore, the use of the term "Community Information and Referral" would be appropriate for this report.

It may be helpful to distinguish between the ideas of CI&R and "community information center," inasmuch as there is considerable overlap in the activities implied by the two terms and they are often used indiscriminately. Both provide information. In a CI&R operation, when information is given, it is provided as a link to another resource, rather than as an end in itself. In a "community information center," on the other hand, information provision itself is the end service, and it may take many forms, for example: distributing government publications to users, maintaining a data bank on local demographics, answering on-demand queries about facts and processes of neighborhood growth and development, operating workshops on neighborhood concerns, and perhaps offering a very localized information and referral service. At its first meeting, the Task Force decided to limit its considerations to CI&R.

It may also be useful to distinguish between two major levels of CI&R: generic and specialized. A generic CI&R provider offers CI&R services covering all topics and all groups within a population. Very often the generic CI&R provider is a stand-alone organization--that is, one not hosted by a larger organization. It often treats CI&R as its primary mission. A generic provider may also serve as a switching center vis-a-vis other, more specialized CI&R services, directing clients to the specialized CI&R providers for further information about, or referral to the end resources. The generic provider may also refer clients directly to the end resources that they need.

Specialized CI&R providers, on the other hand, limit the topics they cover (for example, to drug abuse, continuing education, mental health or Catholic affairs); or the populations on which they concentrate (for example, the aging, teenagers or American Indians).

The diagram below illustrates possible relationships among generic providers, specialized providers, and end resources.



!! = Generic I&R Provider

* = Specialized I&R Provider

\# = End-Resource

THE USER'S PERSPECTIVE

A study of people's information needs in New England found that 73 percent of all citizen information needs are personal--solving day-to-day problems, coping with family life, locating recreation facilities, and the like.(1) Other such studies, conducted in other areas of the country, have produced similar findings.

A person confronted by a need faces multiple difficulties in achieving a resolution of that need or securing appropriate resources. The person must be able to sense the need, conceptualize it, analyze it and break it down into component parts. Resolving the need requires its translation into requests for resources (information, advice, service, material goods, etc.) and subsequent location of these resources. If the person cannot complete this entire process independently, assistance is required. At what point does he or she recognize that help is required? From whom is it obtained? Where?

Following traditional information-seeking patterns, the person with a need is most likely to turn first to a friend or relative.(2) The friend or relative, however, may be no more knowledgeable or skilled in seeking solutions than the person with the need.

Within the community, a number of individuals and agencies are available that may be able to help resolve people's needs. Unfortunately, the resources offered by the individuals or agencies may not be widely know to citizens in the community. Other barriers confronting the person in need could include: not knowing whom to contact in a given agency, not knowing how to contact the agency to obtain service, difficulty in communicating the need, lack of transportation, complex application forms, and inconsistent eligibility standards. Clients have also expressed strong concern about the fragmentation of services among different agencies and locations. The individual who approaches an agency to assist in resolving a need may find that the agency cannot help or can help with only a portion of the need. The individual then may be sent from agency to agency.

A community information and referral service can serve as a guide in defining the need and in steering the individual to the most appropriate resource providers. In a given community, however, multiple CI&R's, some generic and some targeted to certain types of needs or user groups, are likely to be in operation. For the person in need, <u>there is often no one clear place to turn</u> even for information and referral.

Some agencies that purport to provide <u>generic</u> CI&R actually have a far more limited orientation, often amounting to a topical bias. The CI&R service may be strongly oriented to human services topics, with the result that "middle class CI&R needs" in areas such as career advancement or recycling materials may be inadequately addressed. The CI&R may also have a hidden bias toward certain client groups if it fails to address physical, cultural and language characteristics of constituent populations.

THE GOVERNMENT PERSPECTIVE

Federal, state and local governments have maintained a very uneven record in providing for community information and referral. As a result, some government programs include CI&R in the establishing legislation while many others do not. In general, there has been a lack of perception of the need to provide adequate CI&R as part of direct service provision, in order to insure awareness of and access to the direct service. Even when that perception has existed, there has been a lack of readiness to fund the information component on a continuing basis.

Federal Perspective. The GAO Report mentioned earlier documents the basic Federal problem in dealing with CI&R. The duplicative, confusing array of CI&R services has been caused by the growing need for accountability at the Federal level. Because human problems tend to overlap the boundaries of established agencies, several different agencies even at the Federal level may be involved in attempting to solve one case, with little or no coordination taking place.

Providers of "community information and referral" at the Federal or national level include the Federal Information Centers; the national "Hotlines" such as Consumer or Runaway; agency extension offices, e.g., Agriculture or Energy; Federal information providers, such as Veteran's Administration, Administration on Aging or Social Security Administration; the National Referral Center at the Library of Congress; and most other Federal government agencies and offices. To these must be added all Federal legislators' offices, both local and national, since they all attempt to solve constituent problems and invariably provide an informal sort of CI&R.

State Perspective. Many of the Federal programs mentioned above, such as Aging and Social Security, are decentralized at the state level. In addition, state government has responsibility for several independent programs, each with its own formal or informal I&R component, in many cases. In order to be as responsive as possible, many governors have added a CI&R component to their offices, and some state legislators have done the same.

Recognizing the overlapping and confusing nature of CI&R at the state level, several states (notably Wisconsin and Michigan) have attempted to establish statewide CI&R networks. These attempts have failed, probably for the following reasons: One central state agency is unable to control the funding, reports and mandates of different agencies (Federal, state and local) across the state; local community information is often too elusive to be controlled in a large CI&R system; local agencies, faced with provision of direct service, did not agree on the potential benefits of cooperating on a state CI&R venture.

Local Government Perspective. Many of the programs funded at the Federal and state levels are administered at the local level. In addition to these, local officials frequently establish their own CI&R

systems to solve the problems of their constituents. A "mayor's action center" or a chamber of commerce may act as a linking agent in a community. Newspaper, radio and television efforts at CI&R (for example, Action Please, Action Line) are common linking services. Churches, block clubs, and ward politicians also often provide CI&R. From the local perspective, the Federal, state and local layers of CI&R service become duplicative, fragmented, and often bewildering. The need for coordination and/or centralization in order to achieve cost effectiveness becomes obvious.

THE PROVIDER PERSPECTIVE

The problems of providing CI&R services extend to those organizations that currently offer the services. A multitude of types and sizes of organizations with a multitude of mandates are involved in providing CI&R services. In this section, CI&R organizations are considered generally, and some of the barriers to optimum service associated with those organizations are enumerated.

For many CI&R providers, CI&R is a secondary or tertiary organizational function. In these cases, CI&R is more likely than other functions to be diminished in times of economic stress; or it may receive little support from top management.

In other cases, a given organization may be forbidden by law from undertaking CI&R in other than its official "domain" (for example, social security or aging). Such prohibitions contribute to the fragmentation of the CI&R effort.

For many providers of CI&R funding is unstable, sometimes deriving from a non-recurring source. Instability of funding evidences itself in the relative instability of some CI&R services themselves and in a constant preoccupation with securing continuing financial support.

In many localities the various CI&R efforts are uncoordinated and in some instances are in hostile competition. Constrastingly, in localities where coordination and cooperation have occurred, there has often been a demonstrated effectiveness and efficiency of the total local CI&R effort.

Although the problems with providing effective CI&R cannot be substantially attributed to the inadequate use of modern technologies, there is strong feeling among members of the Task Force that the newer techologies--especially computer technology--are not currently being exploited to the fullest. Computer technology, for instance, has the potential in some CI&R situations for, among other things, streamlining the maintenance of CI&R databases, sharing that maintenance among CI&R providers, customizing CI&R directories of resources, and providing up-to-date CI&R files at remote sites.

In the field of CI&R there exist no standards that are universally accepted. The standards developed by the Alliance of Information and Referral Services and the efforts by United Way of America to develop a scheme for classifying CI&R case loads and indexing resource

files have not yet received wide adoption. (This perhaps may be due to the perceived need to tailor every CI&R service to local needs and conditions.) One result of not having universal standards has been a very uneven provision of CI&R service, from organization to organization and from locale to locale. Consequently, the client receives varying kinds and qualities of service, depending on the particular CI&R agency he or she uses.

Information, including the service of CI&R providers, is regarded by many citizens as an invisible entity and often is not deliberately sought out in the process of fulfilling their various needs. In addition, formal information channels of all kinds, including the channel of "CI&R service," must compete for the individual's attention with the formidable informal information channels (friends, relatives, neighbors); and the informal channels are usually the victors. Both factors--"invisibility" of information and competition with informal channels--suggest that CI&R organizations have some imposing barriers to overcome in developing a clientele.

In some cases, CI&R providers have not made adequate use of the professional skills of people in allied fields. For instance, many CI&R providers have struggled to establish data collection methods, have set up resource files and have developed indexes to those files without tapping the skills of information professionals. The result has often been cumbersome, sometimes unusable, sometimes over-costly community information and referral systems.

III. ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSES TO THE CI&R CHALLENGE

CRITERIA FOR THE PROVISION OF CI&R

Below are a number of criteria that, generally speaking, contribute to the provision of high-quality CI&R service. The items should be viewed as general guides to quality service; each should be tested in the light of the local situation.

The CI&R Organization. The CI&R organization or that part of an organization that is charged with providing CI&R generally should be characterized by:

- A stated mission that is supported by its recognized constituency, the governors/funders of the CI&R organization, elected officials, and community leaders. Support can be evidenced by their willingness to provide adequate funding.
- A demonstrated capability to serve the designated constituency.
- Access to regularly maintained information about resources (services, activities, organizations, events, information and advice) relevant to its CI&R mission.
- Regularly scheduled hours appropriate to its constituency.
- Geographical "relevance" to the area served (that is, identifiable to and easily accessible by all members of the constituency).
- Easily located through directory assistance or a standard published directory (such as a telephone directory or a directory of (I&R agencies) that is widely available in the community.
- Cooperative relationships with other relevant CI&R services, local or non-local.
- Facilities and equipment sufficient to ensure adequate access and service.

The Staff. People who serve in the role of CI&R provider ordinarily display a number of traits that facilitate their work. Among them are interest in people, creative problem solving ability, capacity for empathy, patience, a sense of humor, sensitivity to people, and an ability to organize. Generally, CI&R staff, either individually or collectively within a given CI&R organization should be able to:

- Relate to each client in a positive and accepting manner.
- Communicate effectively with a wide range of personalities.

- o Assess accurately the needs of clients.
- o Provide appropriate CI&R responses.

In addition it is imperative that the CI&R worker maintain the confidentiality of client information.

Paid and volunteer staff should receive training appropriate for their responsibilities within the CI&R service.

The Community CI&R "Net". Viewing a given community as a whole, certain CI&R features should be available via one or more of the CI&R providers. Here, all the CI&R efforts of the community are viewed as a "net"--a collective service--whether they are formalized into a consortium, network, cooperative, or not. It is desirable that the following be available through the collective CI&R providers, or "net":

- o Paid, trained, professional CI&R staff.
- o CI&R service available to every person in the community.
- o Accurate, up-to-date information about resources with multiple points of access (i.e., physical outlets or phone access).
- o Access appropriate to all members of the community (for example, TTY for the deaf).

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS: A NEW CI&R INSTITUTION

One alternative that is nearly always considered and that has great appeal as a solution to social problems is the creation of a new type of socially supported institution. Thus, the Federal government has created or helped to create a number of new institutions, such as information analysis centers and information clearinghouses, to meet particular service objectives that existing institutions did not seem to meet. Specific examples include the Federal Information Centers, the Educational Resources Information Centers, and mandated CI&R for the aging.

The Task Force considered the possible merits of some new institution to provide CI&R, similar to the Citizen's Advice Bureaus in England. Tempting as it was to consider starting anew and developing an ideal CI&R service, such an approach, on balance, does not seem at all practical. Many types of organizations are already carrying out CI&R or related activities, some as part of their unspoken mission and some to fulfill explicit objectives. It is not likely that either formal or informal CI&R efforts can be easily disenfranchised; and if that is the case, the problem of the public finding an appropriate CI&R service in the maze of all the CI&R services will be exacerbated by the addition of another one. Moreover, a certain redundancy in CI&R services may have the desirable effect of permitting easy access and choice of access by more of the citizenry.

The hazards in creating new information-service organizations are illustrated by the proliferation of information clearinghouses during the late 1960s and 1970s. During a 15-year period, scores of Federally sponsored clearinghouses came into being, some as a result of a free interpretation of Congressional intent. Some of the clearinghouses seem to duplicate services provided by other Federally sponsored information activities and/or by some private-sector organizations.

The problem has drawn the attention of the General Accounting Office which issued a report that questions 1) duplication of effort among Federally funded clearinghouses, 2) the funders' awareness of the activities of their clearinghouses, 3) the quality of service the clearinghouses are offering and 4) continued Federal subsidy of clearinghouse activities. The Department of Health and Human Services currently is conducting a study of clearinghouses, partly in response to the GAO report.

While the problems stemming from the proliferation of information clearinghouses need not necessarily occur if some new CI&R institutions were established, there are enough similarities between clearinghouse and CI&R activities to suggest that the creation of a new type of CI&R institution is not a preferred alternative. It is the opinion of the Task Force that alteration of the existing modes of delivering CI&R is the more acceptable means--socially, economically and politically.

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS: EXISTING INSTITUTIONS

The natural alternative to creating a new institution is to capitalize on the strengths of existing ones.

Capabilities and Limitations of Existing Institutions

Social service agencies. Social service agencies have a long and varied history in CI&R. Established to handle human problems, they have the following stengths in CI&R:

- Knowledge of human services: what they are and how they work;
- Knowledge of human behavior and health and social services needs;
- Interviewing skills and techniques which are used to assess a client's total situation and formulate a plan to deal with the total situation;
- An ethical code based on respect for the individual and his/her right to self-determination. This includes an understanding of how to help enough without helping too much;
- Established networks or contacts involving other social service agencies; and
- A clear commitment to helping people solve their problems.

Social service agencies have been established by different funding sources to handle specific problems and are limited by their mandated programs. Human problems, on the other hand, are often complex rather than simple, and require the service of more than one agency. For example, a client may require emergency financial assistance because of an underlying mental health problem. The agency established to handle emergency financial assistance must interact with the agency established to handle mental health assistance. The client, of course, may enter the social service delivery system at either of the two agencies. For this reason, all social service agencies must be involved in CI&R in some degree.

If this is true, it would seem that the most practical solution to the problem as outlined by the Task Force is to expand the scope of social service agencies specifically to include the provision of generic CI&R. Not only is this an extremely costly solution, but the limitations of the mission and scope of most social service institutions (already discussed) work against it. Social service agencies are established by different funding sources to handle specific problems and are limited by their mandated programs. And in many cases, particular subject expertise is required to provide the services specific to that agency. The set of skills needed to handle the problems of adjudicated youths, for example, are quite different from those required to meet the needs of senior citizens with housing problems.

Recognizing these problems, several Federal agencies have added the mandate of a comprehensive CI&R to the direct service program. This, of course, has added several overlapping mandates for the same function, often without adequate provision for funding. The result of these unrealistic mandates is user frustration, agency competition, and wasted funding.

The comprehensive CI&R service provided in some communities is often the direct result of the agencies in that community responding to the need for CI&R in a cooperative or coordinated fashion. Here, too, funding is most often the basic problem. When a single funding source must choose between direct services and indirect services, such as CI&R, it will nearly always elect direct service. Indirect services do not have the organizational advocates needed to establish them firmly as priorities. As a result, even the direct services may be underutilized because there is no effective system to link them with all of their potential clients.

It should be stressed that the secondary nature of CI&R in social service agencies does not minimize its importance to the public. No social service agency can adequately fulfill its mission without a deliberate mechanism to provide the back-up CI&R.

Libraries. Libraries, too, have many different priorities of service. The funding requirement for CI&R is as difficult to meet here as it is in social service agencies. Several important differences exist, however, that make libraries strong potential CI&R providers. They are:

- Public libraries have been increasingly involved in CI&R provision since 1969. (For a summary of public library involvement, see T. Childers, "Trends in Public Library I&R," Library Journal, October 1, 1979.) These efforts were often launched by funding through the Library Services and Construction Act.

- Library staffs are oriented toward and skilled in collecting, organizing, and disseminating information;

- Libraries are committed to serve a geographic area and the entire population within that geographic area;

- Libraries are often dispersed conveniently throughout their respective constituencies;

- The operating hours of libraries are often longer than the hours of other service or commercial organizations;

- Libraries are among the most politically neutral organizations serving their constituencies;

- Libraries maintain collections of print and non-print materials that support their linking activities;

- The role of libraries in society is evolving from document provider to information provider and the provision of CI&R is a natural part of the emerging role.

Some characteristics peculiar to libraries and library/information professionals pose special barriers to the effective provision of I&R. They are:

- Most librarians are oriented toward and trained in isolating a person's stated information or document need and helping the person find his or her way to the relevant information or documents. The professional orientation is generally not toward dealing with the person's underlying or unstated need.

- Libraries, generally speaking, have several long-standing missions, such as warehousing documents, providing access to documents, and answering queries through the use of those documents. The introduction of a new mission such as CI&R requires that there be a certain amount of displacement of library activities or that there be additional revenues to support the new service. In times of economic constriction, new revenues are hard to find; and it has been demonstrated that few librarians--even those involved in I&R--are willing to consider serious displacement of existing library functions in favor of CI&R.(3)

- In many instances, librarians are isolated from their environment--for example, from other information providers,

service agencies, and other social and political components of the environment. Such isolation mitigates against the effective establishment of links between a client and a needed resource.

COORDINATED SERVICE PROVISION

Clearly social service agencies and libraries each have strengths and weaknesses as CI&R providers. One of the most promising solutions to the problem involves taking full advantage of the special capabilities of both social service agencies and libraries. Because CI&R is not a new concept, and because it exists in different communities in different configurations, solutions will differ from community to community. One possible means of coordination involves the division of front line activities and support activities between social service and the library organizations. (The front line activities include interviewing, clarifying, steering, and retrieval and referral and related functions; while support activities include data collection, organizing, and file maintenance functions.) Other activities amenable to coordination are training and publicity.

The future of CI&R in this country may well depend on the ability of libraries and social service agencies to coordinate their CI&R efforts creatively.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Task Force recommendations have been divided into four sections--EDUCATION, POLICY/LEGISLATION, PROMOTIONAL, AND EXPERIMENTATION AND STUDY. The recommendations are not presented in priority order.

EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Department of Education (Office of Libraries and Learning Technology) should design methods for educating existing library professionals about CI&R, beginning with the faculties of library and information science schools.

Several library and information science faculties have incorporated CI&R in their course of instruction; and since CI&R has been developing mainly in public libraries, it has most often been incorporated into public library course work. Yet the support functions mentioned above--data collection and organization and file maintenance--clearly fall into that area of studies known as "technical services." Strengthening of the "technical services" aspect of CI&R training seems to be called for.

Similarly, the strengths of the social work profession have not been incorporated into the library school course work. If it is true that both professions have specific skills to be utilized in the provision of CI&R, it is also true that some interdisciplinary course work is needed for those professionals who will be expected to do the work. Social work ethics, knowledge of the social service delivery system and interviewing skills are areas that should be incorporated into the library school curriculum.

2. Practicing library professionals and social service agents should be educated about CI&R.

The task of educating current practitioners in libraries and social service agencies should be the combined task of AIRS (Alliance of Information and Referral Services), ALA (American Library Association) and NCLIS (National Commission on Libraries and Information Science). Training courses should be on the interdisciplinary nature of the task to be accomplished.

3. Legislators should be educated about CI&R.

Although there have been several studies of CI&R at Federal, state and local levels, no consensus has been reached on possible solutions to the central problem of independent funding for CI&R. Legislators must learn that adequate funding for CI&R is essential to successful utilization of any social program. In its role as advisor to the Congress, NCLIS should take the lead in this effort at the Federal level.

4. The general public should be educated about the role of CI&R

First, local CI&R services must be advertised, in order to make their existence, their telephone numbers and addresses known. This requires primarily local effort. Second, the role of CI&R's must be understood by the general public so that citizens know what to look for in their attempts to solve problems. This should be a national public awareness program.

POLICY/LEGISLATION RECOMMENDATIONS

5. CI&R should be included in current library legislation.

Libraries have been experimenting with the provision of CI&R since 1969, and the current LSCA (Library Services and Construction Act) has greatly aided in this effort. CI&R should be explicitly included in the revision of the LSCA or any future library legislation in order to provide authorization for funding of CI&R efforts in libraries.

6. CI&R should be included in national information policy.

It is essential that all citizens have free access to CI&R services. In order to insure this access, CI&R should be mandated in national information policy.

7. Libraries should be included as CI&R options in Federal, state and local legislation.

Some current legislated services include mandates for CI&R services related to the programs, but most do not. If libraries were included as options for CI&R service in specific program legislation, local program administrators would have alternatives for service other than the development of a new, costly and often duplicative service agency.

8. Generic CI&R should be funded in all geographic areas.

One of the greatest difficulties in the current CI&R situation is that it is all too often a secondary or tertiary service of an organization whose primary function is to provide a direct service. Even though CI&R may have been legislated as part of its service description, lack of adequate funding may have forced CI&R to a lower priority. Independent funding of autonomous generic CI&R's (perhaps as part of a human service or library, or combination of the two) will have the effect of bolstering the priority of CI&R and releasing it from its second-class dependency on direct service programs.

PROMOTIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

9. AIRS and ALA should promote optional CI&R roles for social service agencies and libraries.

Perhaps the most imposing obstacle to the provision of CI&R is the number of different CI&R functions and the specific skills needed

to maintain those functions. For example, the interviewing skills needed to make an assessment are very different from the set of skills needed to develop a taxonomy for the resource file; and it is almost impossible to find these disparate skills in one person. It is essential for potential CI&R organizations to know about the various complementary roles that each can play.

10. A task force of experts should be established to consult with local agencies/governments.

In order to promote the interdisciplinary nature of CI&R, a task force consisting of librarians and social workers should be established under the auspices of ALA and AIRS, to explore options at the local level which would aid in the development of alternative methods of providing CI&R.

11. AIRS and ALA should seek funding for a demonstration of a cooperative CI&R.

AIRS has a Library Committee and ALA has a CI&R section. Both of these national organizations are involved in promoting alternatives in providing CI&R. They should jointly sponsor a demonstration which would promote cooperative approaches to the task, including librarians and human service providers as key figures.

EXPERIMENTATION AND STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

12. Study is needed on the impact of CI&R on the user.

Research in the field of CI&R is seriously lacking. There have been investigations of citizens' need for and use of information; but there has been to date no full study of the impact of CI&R on the user. The Task Force recommends that such a study be funded at the national level.

13. Study is needed on the application of automation to CI&R.

At the present time, automation in CI&R is limited to accessing the resource file and maintaining report functions. Research is needed on file access, file update and file manipulation in order to facilitate the wise application of higher technologies to the CI&R field.

NOTES

1) Chen, Ching - Chih, et al, Citizen Information Seeking Patterns: A New England Study. Boston, MA: School of Library Service, Simmons College, 1979. (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Libraries and Learning Technology, Grant No. G007900537)

2) Brenda Dervin et al., The Development of Strategies for Dealing with the Information Needs of Urban Residents. Seattle, WA: School of Communication, University of Washington, 1976. (U.S. Office of Education, Office of Libraries and Learning Technology, Project No. L0035JA)

3) Childers, Thomas Final Report Public Library Information and Referral Project. Philadelphia, PA: School of Library and Information Science, Drexel University, 1981. (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Libraries and Learning Technology, Grant No. G007900362)

APPENDIX

National Commission
on Libraries and Information Science

COMMUNITY INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICES

Membership List

Ms. Carolyn Anthony, Chief
Community Information Service
Baltimore County Public Library
320 York Road
Towson, Masryland 21204

Dr. Thomas Childers
Professor of Library and
Information Science
School of Library and Information
Science
Drexel University
32nd and Chestnut Streets
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19104

Ms. Kay Collins
(Consultant)
1465 South Grape
Denver, Colorado 80222

Mr. Robert Croneberger (Chair)
Director
Memphis-Shelby County Public Library
and Information Center
1850 Peabody Avenue
Memphis, Tennessee 38104

Mr. Kenneth E. Dowlin, Director
Pikes Peak Regional Library District
Post Office Box 1579
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80901

Mrs. Corazon E. Doyle
Executive Director
Community Information & Retrieval
Services
1515 E. Osborn Road
Phoenix, Arizona 85014

Dr. Hardy Franklin, Director
D.C. Public Library
901 "G" Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001

Mr. Thomas D. Harnish, Manager
Home Delivery of Library
Research Program
OCLC, Inc.
6565 Frantz Road
Dublin, Ohio 43017

Mr. Norman Maas, Chief
TIP/Detroit Public Library
5201 Woodward Avenue
Detroit, Michigan 48202

Mr. Gerald J. Sophar
Executive Officer
Science and Education
Administration
Technical Information Systems
U.S. Department of Agriculture
National Agricultural Building
Beltsville, Maryland 20705
-also-
Staff Member, NCLIS

NCLIS Commission Members

Mr. Charles Benton
Chairman
Public Media, Inc.
1144 Wilmette Avenue
Wilmette, Illinois 60091

Dr. Carlos A. Cuadra
President
Cuadra Associates, Inc.
2001 Wilshire Boulevard
Suite 305
Santa Monica, California 90403

NCLIS Commission Members (Continued)

Mrs. Joan H. Gross
Assistant for Public Affairs
New York State Department of Housing
Preservation and Development
100 Gold Street
New York, New York 10038

Mrs. Clara S. Jones
325 Vernon Street
Apartment 404
Oakland, California 94610

NCLIS Staff

Mrs. Ruby Woods Robinson
(Staff Liaison)
Research Associate (1980-1982)

Mrs. Christina Carr Young
(Staff Liaison)
Research Associate (1982-)

Mrs. Mary Alice Hedge Reszetar
Associate Director

Official Observer

Ms. Jean E. Coleman, Director
Office for Library Outreach Services
American Library Association
50 East Huron Street
Chicago, Illinois 60611